

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
28 April 2017

Original: English

Twenty-fifth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

1. The present report is the twenty-fifth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and an assessment of the process of the implementation of the resolution since the report of my predecessor on the subject issued on 21 October 2016 (S/2016/882).

I. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

2. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented, as highlighted in previous reports. The implementation of a number of provisions, including those relating to the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias and the delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, however, remains pending. Progress has, in part, been affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

3. With the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council aimed at strengthening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in line with the Taif Accords of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon had committed themselves. This objective has remained the priority of my efforts to facilitate the implementation of all resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

4. On 27 December 2016, the Cabinet agreed on its ministerial statement. As in 2014, in the statement, the commitment of Lebanon to resolution 1701 (2006) and its intention to address the needs of the Lebanese Armed Forces and security services were reaffirmed. It was also emphasized that "Lebanese citizens have a right to resist Israeli occupation, ward off its attacks and recover occupied territories".

5. In both the ministerial statement and the President's oath of office, the need to keep Lebanon out of foreign conflicts and to comply with the Charter of the League



of Arab States was noted. In the statement, a national counter-terrorism strategy was referred to and it was noted that a national defence strategy would have to be agreed upon through dialogue.

6. In the ministerial statement, the new Government noted that "the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue should be promoted so as to avert tensions in the camps and the use of weapons, which is counterproductive and unacceptable to the Lebanese people and its Government". For the first time, the Government committed itself to strengthening the role of women in public life and pledged to work with the Parliament to institute a quota for women in the electoral law.

7. The President, Michel Aoun, and the Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, attended the summit of the League of Arab States in Amman on 29 March. Before the summit, five former presidents and prime ministers of Lebanon sent a letter to the League of Arab States in which they emphasized the commitment of Lebanon to international resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), rejected illegal arms and expressed support for the Baabda Declaration and the disassociation policy. In his speech at the summit, the President emphasized the importance of dialogue in ending conflicts in the region and the readiness of Lebanon to assist in that regard.

8. Ahead of the legislative elections to be held before the expiration of the Parliament's term on 20 June, the President and the Government clearly expressed, in the oath of office and the ministerial statement, support for a new electoral law. Political leaders have continued their efforts to reach consensus on such a law. The Prime Minister has repeatedly stated his expectation that the new legislation would include a quota for women. On 12 April, the President postponed the convening of Parliament for a period of one month on the basis of article 59 of the Lebanese Constitution with a view to creating more time for discussions on the new electoral law. On 18 April, the International Support Group for Lebanon issued a statement encouraging the country's leaders to make maximum use of the time until 15 May, the date on which the Speaker, Nabih Berri, intends to call for a Parliament session, to intensify their efforts and agree upon an electoral framework for free and fair elections, in accordance with the Constitution.

9. In line with the Government's stated focus on economic priorities and governance, intensive discussions have taken place on the development and approval of a budget. On 27 March, the Cabinet endorsed the draft State budget and submitted it for parliamentary ratification. The last State budget was approved in 2005.

10. The Cabinet agreed on key security appointments on 9 March. General Joseph Aoun succeeded General Kahwaji as Commander of the Lebanese Army, and Major General Imad Othman assumed the post of Director General of the Internal Security Forces.

11. The number of registered refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic hosted by Lebanon remained at slightly more than 1 million. By the end of 2016, \$1.13 billion had been received under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, amounting to 53 per cent of the overall appeal. At the Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region held in Brussels on 4 and 5 April 2017, a total of \$6 billion was committed by donors for the Syrian Arab Republic and the region for 2017, and \$3.7 billion was committed for 2018 to 2020. In the statements made by the Prime Minister at the conference, he expressed his concern over the level of tensions between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees.

12. The dialogue between the Future Movement and Hizbullah continued, with a view to preventing tensions along sectarian lines. In all five dialogue sessions held

during the reporting period, the two parties emphasized the need for agreement on a new electoral law. Following the session held on 20 March, both parties categorically rejected the possibility of a parliamentary vacuum and urged all forces to pursue their consultations with the aim of agreeing on a new law.

13. In its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request of the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. This remains critical to enabling proper border control and management, including of the movement of people and potential movements of arms. Progress remained difficult to achieve, in part owing to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

14. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain elements essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and territorial integrity. While border delineation is a bilateral matter, progress on the matter remains an obligation of the two countries, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006).

15. Cross-border violations of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity continued on the eastern and northern borders. On three occasions in March, Syrian military aircraft targeted militants in the outskirts of Arsal in an area where the Lebanese-Syrian border is not delineated, causing no casualties. There were reports of 10 cross-border shooting incidents that involved the Syrian army and one incident of shelling from the Syrian Arab Republic.

16. In violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006), Israel continued to occupy the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area during the reporting period.

17. Unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets of the Israel Defense Forces, continued to make almost daily overflights of Lebanon during the reporting period, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). In identical letters dated 23 February 2017 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (A/71/816-S/2017/171), the Permanent Mission of Lebanon asserted that, since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), Israel had violated the sovereignty of Lebanon by land, sea and air on a daily basis.

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

18. The Lebanese Armed Forces remained at the forefront of the efforts of Lebanon to protect its stability and extend the State's authority throughout its territory. Nevertheless, that endeavour continued to be challenged, as Lebanese citizens, including members of Hizbullah, remained involved in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic.

19. Four regiments of the Lebanese Armed Forces were deployed on the eastern border, maintaining an important presence of State authority in this vulnerable area. On 5 December 2016, a soldier from the Lebanese Armed Forces was killed and another injured in an attack reportedly perpetrated by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) against an army checkpoint in the northern town of Biqa' Safrin. Army units conducted raids in the area in search of the gunmen, which resulted in the arrest of several suspects. Nine of the members of the Lebanese security forces abducted in 2014, allegedly by the former Nusrat Front and ISIL, remained in detention.

20. The Lebanese security services also pursued their efforts to prevent terrorist attacks in the country. According to the Lebanese authorities, their forces were successful in thwarting a number of potential attacks, such as the attempt to attack a café in the Hamra neighbourhood of Beirut on 21 January 2017. The alleged perpetrator had reportedly pledged allegiance to ISIL and was brought before a court on 26 January. In that connection, a number of arrests were made in Sidon, including some of alleged supporters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir. Arrests of individuals suspected of terrorist activities or attacks continued, including of a man allegedly involved in the attack against Kasarah on 31 August 2016.

21. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued their operations against violent extremists in and around the town of Aarsal. On 25 November, the Lebanese Armed Forces launched a major operation that resulted in the arrest of 11 individuals, including one alleged to be an ISIL senior commander responsible for coordinated attacks involving booby-trapped cars and suicide bombers in the country, including the attacks in 2014 on Aarsal. The President publicly praised this unprecedented security operation by the army.

22. The level of support from the international community helped to sustain the Lebanese Armed Forces in their efforts to prevent and respond to threats to the country's stability. They continued to make progress in establishing border observation posts along the border between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon as part of a project funded by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Canada. As part of its support package to Lebanon, the United States of America delivered an armed Cessna aircraft to the Lebanese Air Force.

23. In the context of two separate abductions of Lebanese citizens, one of whom was killed and the other released, in the Biqa' region on 18 and 20 January 2017, the Minister of the Interior, Nohad Machnouq, stated, on 22 January, that he had consulted with the President and the Prime Minister with regard to developing a security plan aimed at combating kidnappings.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

24. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, a key provision of the resolution that has not yet been implemented. It reflects and reaffirms a decision to which all Lebanese committed themselves in the Taif Accords. It is critical that the Accords be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among the Lebanese and to strengthen the institutions of the State. The Lebanese State should pursue its efforts to achieve a monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout its territory.

25. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continued to operate outside the control of the Government, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside government control, Hizbullah is the most heavily armed militia in the country. In a democratic State, it remains a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains a militia that has no accountability to the democratic, governmental institutions of the State and that has the power to take that State to war without any public accountability or parliamentary review. The maintenance of arms and the alleged increase in arsenals by Hizbullah and other groups pose a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In addition, several Palestinian armed groups continued to operate in the country inside and outside the refugee camps.

26. There has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004). Since the adoption of that resolution, no specific steps have been taken to tackle this crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. The maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal outside a legal framework and its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be denounced by a number of voices in Lebanon, who consider these to be destabilizing factors in the country and ones that undermine democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued presence of such arms as an implicit threat for use within Lebanon for political reasons.

27. On 11 February 2017, in an interview with a foreign media outlet, the President stated, in response to a question about Hizbullah and its weapons, that there was a "need for its presence to complement the role of the army" and that it was "an essential part of defending Lebanon". On 13 February 2017, in another media engagement, the President stated that the issue of Hizbullah's weapons was subject to the national defence strategy, while reiterating that Lebanon had to "use special means for fighting, in which regular and popular forces take part", since the country was "unable to assemble a military force capable of confronting those forces" that represent a threat to it.

28. On 14 February, the Prime Minister, on the occasion of the commemoration of the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, delivered a public address in which he noted the sharp disagreement among Lebanese political actors about Hizbullah's weapons and stated that what protected the country was the consensus on the army, the legitimate forces and the State, and only the State.

29. In identical letters dated 13 February 2017 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (S/2017/133), the Permanent Representative of Israel conveyed his Government's view that the statement made by the President of Lebanon on 11 February was "actively encouraging and legitimizing Hizbullah activity", in violation of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). This message was repeated in identical letters dated 17 February 2017 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (S/2017/148).

30. On 14 February, my Deputy Spokesperson recalled that the Security Council, in its resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006), had called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias and that, in my predecessor's reports, it had been stated that militias should be disarmed. My Deputy Spokesperson also encouraged Lebanon to seize the current political momentum to resume discussions on a national defence strategy. No sessions of the National Dialogue were held during the reporting period. On 17 March, the Security Council members reaffirmed to the press their strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon and for the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

31. The participation of Hizbullah and other Lebanese groups in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to breach the disassociation policy of Lebanon. In a public speech on 23 December 2016, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, praised the outcome of the battle of Aleppo as a "big military, political and moral development" for the movement and a victory that Hizbullah should "build on militarily and politically", stating that it could "open new fronts for political solutions".

32. On 13 November 2016, a Hizbullah military parade with a large number of fighters as well as vehicles and equipment was reported to have taken place near Qusayr in the Syrian Arab Republic. On this occasion, the Head of the Executive Council of Hizbullah reportedly addressed the parade as a representative of the

Secretary-General of Hizbullah. The Deputy Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Naim Qassem, was quoted in a Lebanese newspaper shortly thereafter as saying "we now have a trained army and we do not need to rely on guerrilla tactics". The Hizbullah press bureau later issued a formal denial of those statements.

33. On 15 November, the Lebanese Armed Forces issued a formal statement in response to media reports speculating that the equipment presented at the parade could have belonged to them, denying that any of their equipment had been taken. In response to other allegations that some of the vehicles displayed at the parade may have been made in the United States, a spokesperson for the Department of State of the United States, on 21 December, also denied that the vehicles were from the Lebanese Armed Forces and confirmed that the Lebanese Armed Forces had fully complied with end-use monitoring requirements.

34. Allegations that the Beirut airport was being used as an entry point for weapons being transferred to Hizbullah were rejected. In identical letters dated 21 November 2016 addressed to my predecessor and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/987), the Permanent Representative of Israel alleged that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was "using commercial flights from Iran to Lebanon to transfer arms and related material to Hizbullah" either through direct air shipments from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut, or through Damascus, in violation, among others, of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). In a letter dated 22 November 2016 (S/2016/992), the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran denied accusations that it had violated United Nations resolutions as "baseless and unsubstantiated". On 24 November, the Chair of Rafic Hariri International Airport issued a statement strongly refuting those allegations as well. In identical letters dated 25 January 2017 (A/71/770-S/2017/80), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon conveyed a statement by the Ministry of Defence of Lebanon to the effect that it was "fully committed to implementing Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), especially with respect to the prohibition on the entry or smuggling of weapons to any party whatsoever through Lebanese State facilities".

35. Against the backdrop of an alleged strike by the Israeli Air Force on several targets in the Syrian Arab Republic on 17 March, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, stated in a video recording from his office, which was broadcast on Israeli television the same day, that: "When we identify attempts to transfer advanced weapons to Hizbullah and we have intelligence and it is operationally feasible, we act to prevent it. That's how it has been in the past, and that's how it will be in the future".

36. On 9 November 2016, the head of the pro-Damascus Arab Tawhid Party and former Minister, Wiam Wahhab, was quoted as announcing that a group affiliated with his party, named the Tawhid Brigades, would start operating in all Lebanese regions. According to media reports quoting Mr. Wahhab, the group would "stand by the Lebanese army and Lebanese security forces in repelling any threat that Lebanon might face" while being a civil brigade that refuses to use arms, except for self-defence and to support the Army and security forces and to face any Israeli aggression, as part of the resistance. On 24 November, Mr. Wahhab reportedly stated that those brigades had held an unarmed paramilitary parade.

37. On 31 March 2017, Hizbullah units reportedly raided warehouses said to be housing illicit drugs in the Burj al-Barajinah area of southern Beirut, a few weeks after Lebanese security forces carried out a raid in the same area. The Minister of the Interior, in response to what he called a "military display", stated that such action was "completely and utterly condemned and rejected. It is a slap in the face at the beginning of a new presidential term and a challenge to the very logic of

having a State". He emphasized the Government's intent to respond through the further extension of State authority as the only authority. He also rejected "all forms of self-security".

38. The situation in the Palestine refugee camp of Ein El Helweh remained tense during the reporting period, with three rounds of violence in December 2016 and in February to March and April 2017. In one of the most severe outbreaks of violence in 2016, eight people died and several others were wounded as a result of clashes that involved the use of mortars and heavy artillery and lasted several days starting on 21 December, leading many of the camp's residents to seek shelter elsewhere. The clashes were initially prompted by the killing of a member of the Asbat al-Ansar faction by unidentified assailants and subsequently led to fighting between members of Fatah and radical extremist groups. In a statement made on 22 December, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) condemned the violence and called for restraint. The Agency temporarily suspended its operations at various dates between 21 December 2016 and 3 January 2017.

39. On 18 February 2017, following the resignation of the head of the joint Palestinian security forces in Ein El Helweh and the withdrawal of Fatah and Hamas from participation in the forces, the forces were dismantled. Clashes between Fatah and other groups resumed from 23 to 28 February, resulting in two people being killed. Despite the signing of a ceasefire agreement on 26 February, fighting spread shortly thereafter to the entire camp, which resulted in a boy being killed and several civilians being injured, including one UNRWA staff member. Some 100 families were reportedly displaced during this new wave of violence. Five UNRWA facilities were used as barracks by armed groups. On 3 March, UNRWA issued a statement strongly condemning the use of its installations by armed actors, in violation of the inviolability and neutrality of United Nations premises. On 28 February, the various factions agreed upon a new ceasefire that included the resumption of a joint security agreement and the handover by Palestinian factions of a number of fugitives to the Lebanese authorities.

40. On 1 March, the Prime Minister chaired a ministerial-level meeting on the situation in the camp, in addition to having convened meetings with a number of stakeholders in Sidon. Mediation efforts were also made by the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, during his visit to Lebanon from 23 to 26 February. Nevertheless, from 23 to 25 March, new clashes were reported, in which three people were killed. Armed clashes also occurred on 8 and 10 March in the Beddawi and Burj al-Barajinah camps, respectively, during which two individuals were killed. These incidents were seemingly unrelated to those in Ein El Helweh. The alleged links between radical groups in Palestine refugee camps and terrorist cells outside the camps also point to the continued risks resulting from the maintenance of weapons in the camps.

41. New security forces were deployed to Ein El Helweh, but despite this a new round of violence erupted in the camp on 7 April and lasted five days. These clashes, between an Islamist group led by Bilal Badr and the security forces, reportedly resulted in nine deaths and 104 people being wounded, among them numerous civilians, as at 13 April. The clashes also led to the localized displacement of some civilians. UNRWA called on all armed factions in the camp to stop the violence, respect the rule of law and ensure the protection of Palestine refugees, particularly children.

42. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps also continued. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 by the National Dialogue and confirmed at subsequent sessions, no progress was made during the reporting period with

regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country.

II. Observations

43. I welcomed the election of a President, the designation of a Prime Minister and the formation of a Government in my latest report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2017/201). I reiterate that these steps are vital starting points for institutions in Lebanon to be restored to their full functioning.

44. With the election of a President, the third since resolution 1559 (2004) was adopted, and the formation of a Government, Lebanon has an opportunity to make progress on the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004), including the extension of its authority throughout its territory, the delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border and ensuring the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. In that regard, I note that the National Dialogue is under the direct authority of the President, and I encourage the President to seize the current political momentum to resume discussions on a national defence strategy within that forum.

45. I also note favourably the political momentum that seems to be prevailing since the election. The adoption of a budget for the first time in 12 years would be a significant milestone and another step towards full institutional functioning.

46. As political leaders discuss possible changes to the electoral law, it is important that the political capital resulting from the hard-won agreement on the Presidency not be jeopardized through the paralysis of another State institution, the Parliament. There should be no further delays in taking appropriate steps to hold the elections so that the Parliament is fully restored to its legislative function and that all three powers function simultaneously and effectively.

47. I take note of the media statement made by the President on 13 February 2017 as a clarification of his earlier statement of 11 February. I urge Lebanon to express uncontrovertibly and with one voice its continued commitment to resolution 1559 (2004) and other relevant Security Council resolutions. It is essential that the stagnation in the implementation of the resolution does not lead to an endorsement of militias maintaining their weapons.

48. The reiteration by Lebanon of its commitment to international resolutions in its ministerial statement is positive, and its stated intent to promote the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue is in line with resolution 1559 (2004). I call upon Lebanon to renew its commitment to the disassociation policy and the Baabda Declaration.

49. The widespread proliferation of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the existence of heavily armed militias, undermines the security of Lebanese citizens. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern. I call upon all concerned to contribute to efforts to reinforce the institutions of the Lebanese State. I reiterate my call upon Hizbullah and all other parties concerned not to engage in any military activity inside or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004).

50. I continue to urge the Government and armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah and other armed groups from acquiring

weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004).

51. I also call upon countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah to encourage the transformation of the armed group into a solely civilian political party and its disarmament, in accordance with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interests of Lebanon and regional peace and security.

52. The participation of Lebanese citizens in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is a breach of the policy of disassociation and the principles of the Baabda Declaration. It presents considerable risks to the stability of Lebanon and challenges to its sovereignty. The involvement of Hizbullah in the Syrian Arab Republic for several years is contrary to resolution 1559 (2004), and demonstrates the failure of Hizbullah to disarm and its refusal to be accountable to the State institutions that the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) was intended to strengthen. I am concerned at the reported involvement of Hizbullah elsewhere as well as that of Lebanese elements in fighting in the region, which poses risks to the stability of Lebanon and of the region. Such activities also make the prospect of the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) appear more remote. I call anew upon Hizbullah to step back from its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic. I also remain deeply concerned about the continuing threat to Lebanon posed by terrorism and violent extremism, including from groups such as ISIL and the former Nusra Front.

53. The continuous efforts made by the Lebanese Armed Forces to prevent and respond to threats to the stability of Lebanon are commendable. The support provided by the international community to build the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces and provide them with assets has been instrumental in increasing their ability to protect the country. It is essential that the confidence of international partners in the Lebanese Armed Forces be maintained. The continued commitment of Lebanon to relevant resolutions and to the guiding principles in partnerships with the international community is important. I call upon donors to maintain their critical support to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

54. I welcome the nomination of a new Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces and other senior security officials. This is a positive sign not only of the new-found political consensus, but also of continued cross-sectarian political support of the Lebanese Armed Forces and of other important security services.

55. I appreciate the efforts of Lebanon aimed at extending its authority throughout its territory, including through renewed efforts to address the insecurity in the Biqa' region. I condemn the continued detention of the remaining Lebanese soldiers and security forces personnel held captive by ISIL in the eastern Lebanese-Syrian border area. I call upon those holding the remaining security personnel hostage to release them without further delay.

56. I welcome the ongoing cooperation between the various State security agencies and the Lebanese Armed Forces, which has contributed to the thwarting of attacks and various arrests of individuals allegedly plotting terrorist operations. I note that such operations and arrests should be conducted in accordance with international human rights law. It is in the national interest of Lebanon to ensure that those behind the perpetration of terrorist acts, including political assassinations, are held accountable and that violence is not committed with impunity. Broad political support for the various security operations, including subsequent judicial processes, sends a strong political message in that regard.

57. UNRWA continues to face extreme challenges in its efforts to deliver education, health, relief and social services to Palestine refugees in Lebanon. The Agency continues to face serious financial constraints and, in some cases, operates in a tense environment, characterized in Ein El Helweh by recurrent fighting among factions for control over territory. As noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/93, the Agency also faces a critical financial situation caused by the structural underfunding of its programmes. I call upon donors to urgently address the recurrent funding shortfalls affecting UNRWA operations, because doing so may contribute to the stabilization of the situation in the camps. Such efforts are without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement in the region.

58. I note that the joint Palestinian security forces have been replaced with a new security arrangement serving as the main interlocutor of the Lebanese Armed Forces on security matters within the Ein El Helweh camp. I am concerned that the recent tensions in the camp point to the risk that factions and extremist elements could take advantage of a security vacuum. I hope that the new security arrangement will be maintained and call upon all concerned to refrain from resorting to violence. I note with concern the use of UNRWA premises by armed actors as barracks and recall the inviolability of United Nations premises.

59. The recent violence in Ein El Helweh and the resulting casualties demonstrate the persistent risks to the stability of Lebanon that arise from the maintenance of weapons outside the State's authority. I call upon the Government to pursue its efforts aimed at implementing the decisions of the National Dialogue taken in 2006, including on the disarmament of Palestinian militias.

60. I regret the absence of any progress on the delineation and demarcation of the border with the Syrian Arab Republic, which has a significant impact on border control, and continue to call upon the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to make progress in the full delineation of their common border. I am encouraged by the positive impact of the efforts of international donors, including the United Kingdom, aimed at decreasing smuggling and improving border controls. I reiterate my view that integrated border management will, in the long term, contribute significantly to better control of the borders of Lebanon and help to prevent the illegal transfer of weapons and fighters in both directions, which has become an ever more pressing concern in the context of events in the Syrian Arab Republic.

61. I condemn all violations of the sovereignty of Lebanon. I continue to call upon all parties, including the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and to prevent cross-border violations, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). I also reiterate my call upon Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, as well as to cease immediately its overflights of Lebanese airspace, which undermine the credibility of the Lebanese security services and generate anxiety among the civilian population.

62. After more than six years of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon continues to face the political, security, economic, humanitarian and social impacts of the crisis on its own soil, with persistent risks to its stability. I welcome the continuous generosity of Lebanon in responding to the crisis. As Lebanon underlined at the Brussels Conference, the continued and sustained presence of refugees requires immediate and significant support beyond the levels currently provided. I urge donors to build upon the momentum of the Brussels Conference by offering concrete commitments to the investment programme of Lebanon as the framework for the country's focus on stabilization and development.

63. Lebanon faces the opportunity for a reprieve owing to the gradual resumption of the work of most of its institutions. It is important that this opportunity be seized upon to move forward on the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). I therefore count on the continued commitment of the Government to its international obligations and call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). The United Nations will continue its efforts towards the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.